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Contacts: Carolyn Cummins, (360) 438-4814
Greg Weeks, (360) 438-4800
Kirsta Glenn, (360) 438-4812

Report sheds new light on availability of worker benefits

OLYMPIA – Three out of four Washington employers provide health care insurance to full-time workers, according to a new report released today by the Washington State Employment Security Department. Public administration and management firms rank at the top of the list of companies likely to provide coverage, while employees of food and lodging businesses are the least likely to benefit.

The report, based on a survey of Washington employers, examines a spectrum of benefits offered by employers, including health insurance, retirement, paid vacation time, sick leave, and child care.

“This report provides strategic information about the availability of benefits and broadens our understanding of compensation beyond monetary wages,” said Employment Security Commissioner Sylvia P. Mundy. “Considering the many challenges faced by both employers and workers in securing benefits like health and child care, this survey and future updates will provide vital information for decision-making.”

The study showed that 76 percent of employers provide health care benefits to full-time workers, while 23 percent of firms cover part-time workers. Slightly fewer cover workers’ dependents.

Among firms that offer health care benefits to full-time workers, 37 percent share the cost of coverage with their employees, while another 37 percent pay the entire cost.

Forty-six percent of all employers said their firms changed health care coverage in the last year because of increasing costs. Analysts estimate that about 60 percent of firms that provide benefits changed their plans for this reason, although the report doesn’t specifically break down responses in this way.

Paid vacation leave is the most commonly provided benefit, with 77 percent of firms offering it to full-time workers and 22 percent to part-time employees. A majority of employers, 60 percent, offer a retirement plan to their full-time workers and 19 percent cover part-time employees.

Sick leave, however, was less common. Fifty-six percent of employers offer this benefit to full-time workers and 28 percent cover part-time employees.

(More)

Employer-provided child care is the least common benefit included in the survey. Just 1 percent of firms provide on-site child care services to their full-time employees and 2 percent offer subsidies.

Employees were also invited to list other benefits offered by their firms. Life and disability insurance and dental coverage were frequently mentioned.

Large companies – those with 250 or more workers – are more likely to offer benefits. In fact, 99 percent of large firms offer health insurance to full-time workers, whereas 54 percent of very small firms – those with up to nine workers – offer coverage to full-time workers.

The findings are from the *Washington State Job Vacancy and Employee Benefits Survey* conducted by the Washington State Employment Security Department's Labor Market and Economic Analysis Branch. Surveys were sent to more than 10,700 Washington firms late last year, with valid responses received from about 6,400. Replies were used to estimate findings for all Washington employers.

Both the employee benefits analysis and a second report released Monday examining the availability of jobs in Washington are available online at <http://www.workforceexplorer.com/>; click on "Economy." Printed copies of the reports can be obtained by calling Carolyn Cummins at (360) 438-4814.

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